

# OUR MONTHLY.

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### THE THEBAN LEGION.

BY PROF. WM. M. BLACKBURN.

#### CHAPTER II.

##### THE ANXIETIES OF MAURICE.

“ONE hour with Victor might settle my doubts,” said Maurice, the Centurion, as he gazed from a high mountain on the western border of Persia. He had learned the Gospel from Victor, and looked to him as a guide in matters of Christian duty. And now he was far away from his best earthly adviser. Around him were the tents of the Roman legions, covering the mountain. Almost in his view were the desolations made on a rapid march across the native land of Abraham. His backward gaze brought up the vision of cities pillaged, towns on fire, churches in ruins, Christians slaughtered, and bands of people driven from their homes to weep and starve in wintry wilds. He knew that other Christians eastward were in dread of outrage from their advancing enemy, and churches, whose history ran back quite to Apostolic days, were exposed to the spoiler’s avarice and fury. No wonder that Maurice felt his soul revolt.

“It is hard enough,” said he, “to fight the pagan foes of my country, but to slay my brethren in the faith, as we did at Edessa, is more than I can

bear. Never again, without resistance, will I see a Christian woman cut to pieces, while clinging to her daughter whom Galerius would make his slave.”

Was it right for him to serve in the army? Could he in honor leave it? Should he desert and risk the terrors of capture, or thenceforth be a vagabond in a strange land? Must he march against the Christians of Persia? These were the questions that troubled his mind. He lifted his eyes to heaven, asking God to give him wisdom, and deliver His people from the woes of war. “Let my right hand wither,” said he, “if it draw the sword upon one of Christ’s flock.” Jehovah would prove the shield of his Church in Persia, and turn back the pitiless invader.

An old warrior was seated upon the frosted grass eating his supper. His rations were stale bacon and hard peas. He cared for nothing better. A coarse purple robe marked him from other soldiers. Certain Persian ambassadors were brought before him, and were told, “This is the Emperor.” They bowed pompously to Carus, the successor of Probus.

They were astonished to find him so rough, and so devoid of courtly style and luxury. They began their speeches. Their “great king” had sent them

## THE GREAT HOME MISSION FIELD.

BY REV. SHELDON JACKSON.

“THE West may now be regarded the great battle-field of the world. The place where, probably more than anywhere else, the destinies of the world are to be decided. The eye of the world is, and should be, fixed on that struggle with more intense interest than any which has ever occurred on the earth, for the ultimate issue will be more far-reaching and mighty. It is to determine what shall be the governing mind of that vast land. Shall it be barbarism, infidelity, Roman Catholicism, or evangelical religion? Never were there so many passions and powers contending in any other conflict; never was a field so large; never was the prospective crown of victory so dazzling.”

REV. ALBERT BARNES.

“There is a great work for the Gospel in Italy and in France. There is a great work for the Gospel before England shall be Christian to the bottom; a great work in Russia, and when we look upon the heathen nations, we can form no estimate of the work that shall be developed in them. But when I look at this Continent, I believe that there is more to be done than in all the rest of the world put together.” HENRY WARD BEECHER.

“We must throw ourselves out upon Home Missions as the first and sublimest Christian duty which the age lays upon us. I say not that we must forsake other and more distant fields. I only say that there can be no other duty at all comparable to the duty of saving our country; none that God so manifestly imposes.”

REV. DR. BUSHNELL.

“I have been in what we call the Great West. I have seen our Father’s

children there, and I have charged my soul, before God, never to forget them. Better that this right hand forget her cunning, or this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. If the West is ‘destroyed for lack of knowledge,’ while we have in our hands the power of averting that doom, God will by and by say to us, ‘The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.’ And it will be a fearful cry, if it shall go up to heaven amid the convulsions of this republic, the sacrifice of our liberties and the wreck of our homes.” REV. DR. BREMAN.

These extracts might be continued indefinitely. But after all that has been said on anniversary platforms by men of broad views and deep feeling, or printed in society reports and religious papers, it is still doubtful whether any fully appreciate the extent and urgency of the work. Old Dr. Cuyler returning from a trip to the Far West (which in his day was east of the Mississippi River) is reported to have addressed a company of theological students something as follows: “Young gentlemen, I have been to the West and am amazed. As I crossed the Alleghenies people began to talk about the West. Crossing Ohio I heard nothing else but the West. And when I reached Illinois it was *all* West—the West was in them and I found it in me.” Then as if overcome by his new view of its magnitude could only exclaim, “I am amazed! I am amazed! I AM AMAZED!”

But since his trip, the great wave of population, as it moves irresistibly forward to the occupation of a continent, has crossed the Mississippi and Missouri, swept over the rich prairies of Iowa and Missouri and left its advanced settlements far out upon the

plains of Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas.

The "Great West" is now beyond the Missouri. It is where the emigrant of '69 shakes hands with the California pioneer of '49, where the hundreds of thousands of Europe meet the tens of thousands of Asia—where the rationalism, infidelity and Roman Catholicism of the West meet the incoming heathenism of the eastern nations, where the waves of population and riotous energies are breaking against the mountains and forcing out new avenues of activity and enterprise.

Beyond the north and south line of the Missouri River, as it marks the boundary between Iowa and Nebraska, is more than one-half of our country. This is now the Great West. To the citizens of the Eastern and Middle States, Chicago, Cincinnati and St. Louis are considered western cities, and Omaha is in the *Far West*, but even Omaha is east of the geographical center of the United States.

When the two General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church met with tearful eyes and swelling hearts in the Third Church of Pittsburg, they represented over four thousand churches and four hundred thousand communicants. But nearly all those churches are east of Omaha and Council Bluffs. A line drawn from the western end of Lake Superior in a southwesterly direction, across Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska, into Central Kansas, will, in a general way, mark the advanced Mission work of the Church. There is scarcely a self-sustaining church west of that line, and but a few scattered Mission stations between it and the Pacific Coast.

*The Great West, then, is the Great Home Mission Field of the Church.* A field amazing in its extent, in its resources, and in its future.

The traveler can take a packet at the Council Bluffs landing and steam up the Missouri, day after day, and week after week, for six weeks, northward and westward two thousand miles, and then stage it hundreds of miles farther before reaching the headwaters

of that river in the center of this great field. Or, if in haste, he can take the Union Pacific R. R. at Omaha, and with a thousand miles of travel by rail and stage and saddle, reach the same point, Fremont's Peak.

Five hundred miles to the northward are the British Possessions, and more than a thousand miles southward, the Gulf of Mexico. San Francisco lies a thousand miles to the west, and Omaha the same distance to the east, while the headwaters of the Allegheny, over two thousand miles away, mark the width of the Mississippi Valley.

With his position upon that mountain, the tourist can almost see the headwaters of Sweet River, which, starting a few miles southward, flows eastward through the Platte fifteen hundred miles before it empties into the Missouri below Omaha.

The springs at his feet form De Noir Creek, and that Wind River, and that in turn the Big Horn, a tributary of the Yellowstone, which emptying into the Missouri, where it crosses the dividing line between Montana and Dakota, makes its way to the Gulf of Mexico, over four thousand miles distant.

Other springs at his feet form Green River, which, far down in Utah, uniting with Grand River, as it comes from the beautiful Parks of Colorado, forms the Colorado of the West, and thus flows on through cañons and scenery of the wildest magnificence, a thousand miles to the Gulf of California. At the western base of the same mountain other bubbling springs forming Gros Ventres Creek, flow into Shoshonee River, and after following a tortuous way of two thousand miles find an outlet through the great Columbia into the Pacific Ocean. About four hundred miles to the southeast are the headwaters of the Arkansas, flowing over two thousand miles, and the Rio Grand, eighteen hundred miles, into the Gulf of Mexico. Such are some of the stepping-stones to assist in forming an estimate of the extent of our western domain.

And in this broad section of nearly

two million square miles, there are *mineral* riches beyond the wildest dreams of DeSoto or Pizarro—a wealth of gold and silver, yet to be developed under improved methods of treatment, that will almost surpass belief. Then there are lead and copper and quicksilver, and many of the chemicals of trade and commerce; also inexhaustible supplies of iron, and a coal field estimated to be twenty-five thousand square miles in extent.

These latter, with cheap Chinese labor, may yet build up in that region a second Pennsylvania.

In addition to the almost unlimited mineral are vast *agricultural* resources.

The public have heard so much of the Great American Desert, and so much prominence has been given to the mineral resources of that section, as to create a wide-spread impression that it is a barren and sterile region. This is a great mistake. Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota, Washington, and Oregon, with large portions of Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado, are agricultural and grazing sections, in distinction from the mineral.

Leaving out of view the rocky regions, the sage-brush and grease-wood plains, and there are rich agricultural and grazing districts in the aggregate equal to over twenty-five States the size of Ohio. Already the agricultural interests of California are twice the value of its mines, and millions of acres, now worthless, will be made productive by irrigation. Such are some of her resources.

Let those who would gain fuller information of their wonderful extent and variety, procure the book, "Our New West," by Samuel Bowles.

And this great land—the western half of our country—with mountain-ranges more grand and plains and valleys more fertile than the eastern half, with "a wealth of minerals and a wealth of agriculture that fairly awe by their boundlessness, with an aggregation of elements and forces that are destined to develop a commerce and industry, a wealth and power, that will rival the most enthusiastic predictions for our Atlantic States' Empire," will

yet have a *great population*. With a population as dense as that of New York State, she would number about one hundred and sixty-six millions, or more than five times the population of the whole United States in 1860. Or with a population as dense as that of Belgium, about eight hundred and thirty-six millions, or more than three times the population of all Europe. If figures sometimes turn our heads, the vastness of these confuses us. The mind wearies in the attempt to form any adequate conception of the magnitude of the field.

A population of over five hundred millions! And the representatives of those millions are already there. Hundreds of thousands are already scattered across the plains and in the ravines and gulches of the mountains. And with the increased facilities of access furnished by the Pacific R. R., hundreds of thousands more are rushing into the new world of adventure and enterprise. They are climbing the mountain sides and prospecting in the gulches of Montana and Idaho, of Wyoming and Colorado, of Arizona, New Mexico, and States of the Pacific Coast. They are preparing the way for the population that shall follow, after the first rush of wild speculation, and develop the permanent interests of the land. They are now laying the foundation of future industries and future empire. And they will do it strongly and quickly. For it is no imbecile or inefficient population. In intelligence, enterprise, breadth of views, indomitable will, and boldness of action, they are not to be equaled in the same number of persons the world over. The men who could have faith in the Pacific R. R., and engineer it across those mountain ranges, who can tunnel "the everlasting hills" in search of wealth, and with scientific skill separate the base from the more precious metals, who can spend months of time and hundreds of thousands of dollars in constructing flumes for carrying water from one section to another miles away; the men who can battle with the Indians and subdue the wilderness, are not the men to do things half way.

They have sought those regions very largely for *gain*. Gain is the one absorbing thought by day and by night. Gain by fair means or by foul, at all hazards, *gain*. Hence, if scruples of conscience or early training stand in the path, they must give way. The Sabbath is ignored, especially in the mining districts,—it is the great business day of the week.

Ignoring the Sabbath, and to an appalling extent destitute of the Gospel, thrown into the seething cauldron of avarice, and wildly reckless speculation; away from the Church and in the midst of saloons innumerable, where "Tangle-leg," "Forty-rod," "Lightning," "Tarantula-juice," and other favorite names describe the deadly character of their drinks; gambling hells filled day and night; and hurdy-gurdy houses, where fallen women, dressed in the gayest and most costly apparel, receive fabulous sums for their purchased favors; in the midst of such surroundings, thousands of our best young men (many of them from Christian families) are gradually cutting loose from the restraints of early religious training, and recklessly becoming bold and defiant infidels, or supremely indifferent, as if God's law had no claims upon them in that godless land. And this is the population that is now giving form to the future.

For in all that broad land the question is now deciding whether these developing resources, growing power, and swelling population shall be brought

under the control of irreligious or Christian influences. If this question shall be decided for Christ, and that section saved from the terrors of a pandemonium on earth, then the Church of Christ in the United States must lay aside all her preconceived ideas of Missionary work, throw to the winds her imperfect view of Christian stewardship, and rise to the greatness of the work. The measures used thirty years ago will not avail now.

The times have changed. Events follow one another in quick succession, and crowd one another with breathless rapidity. The energies of man's nature are quickened into almost superhuman activity. Such being the case, the Church must point the way and control these energies, or be destroyed by them. If the Church is unable to overtake present destitutions, *how* and *by whom* can she expect to overtake them a few years hence, when wickedness has entrenched itself, and the infant becomes a giant power?

Every year's delay will greatly increase the difficulties and expense of occupation. The work can not safely be delayed. Seeking a new baptism of the Spirit, the Church must summon all her energies to the sublime work of an immediate occupation of the continent for Christ.

"There remaineth yet *very much* land to be possessed." Joshua xiii. 1.

"Let us go up *at once* and possess it; for *we are well able*." Num. xiii. 30.